

A Review of Intervention Approaches in Marital Conflicts

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ABSTRACT

This study aimed to review and categorize the most effective intervention approaches for addressing marital conflicts based on empirical research published between 2016 and 2025. A narrative review was conducted using a systematic search strategy across multiple academic databases including Scopus, PsycINFO, PubMed, and Google Scholar. Peer-reviewed empirical studies published in English between 2016 and 2025 were included if they investigated structured interventions aimed at reducing marital conflict or enhancing marital functioning. The selected studies were analyzed using a descriptive analysis method. Data extraction focused on theoretical orientation, intervention components, delivery methods, and reported outcomes. Interventions were grouped thematically to allow comparison across behavioral, emotional, systemic, cultural, and digital modalities. The results revealed a broad range of effective interventions categorized into six major types: behavioral and cognitive-behavioral approaches, emotion-focused and attachment-based interventions, communication and conflict resolution training, systemic and family therapy models, cultural or religious-based strategies, and digital or technology-assisted formats. Cognitive-behavioral and emotionally-focused interventions were frequently reported to improve communication, emotional regulation, and marital satisfaction. Communication training enhanced conflict resolution skills across diverse populations. Systemic approaches provided insight into relational patterns and broader family dynamics. Culturally adapted and spiritually oriented programs demonstrated high relevance in traditional or faith-based communities. Digital interventions offered promising alternatives for expanding access to marital therapy, especially in remote or underserved areas. Intervention strategies for marital conflict are diverse, effective, and increasingly adapted to meet the emotional, cultural, and contextual needs of couples. Integrating cognitive, emotional, and systemic approaches with cultural sensitivity and technological innovation enhances both the reach and impact of therapeutic practices. Future research should prioritize long-term follow-up, inclusivity, and comparative evaluations across different stages of marital conflict.

Keywords: marital conflict, couple therapy, intervention approaches.

1. Introduction

Marital conflict is one of the most significant relational challenges faced by couples, and its implications extend beyond the dyadic relationship into the psychological well-being of individuals, the emotional security of children, and the overall stability of the family system. Frequent and unresolved marital disputes have been consistently linked to elevated stress levels, increased risk of depression and anxiety, diminished life satisfaction, and even somatic health issues. When conflicts within a marital relationship become persistent and intense, they not only erode intimacy and emotional connection but also contribute to relational burnout and emotional withdrawal, making reconciliation increasingly difficult over time. In various studies, the presence of chronic conflict in marital life has been associated with a decline in interpersonal communication and emotional responsiveness, leading to the deterioration of trust and commitment between partners (Ahmadzadeh et al., 2019; Mardani et al., 2023).

Culturally, the dynamics of marital conflict and the approaches to its resolution are deeply embedded in societal norms and expectations regarding gender roles, communication styles, and family structures. In collectivist societies, for example, where family cohesion and reputation are often prioritized over individual expression, conflicts may be more likely to remain unspoken or be resolved through indirect means. However, such approaches can also contribute to emotional suppression and unresolved grievances, especially when couples are not equipped with effective tools for conflict resolution (Spaumer et al., 2025). In contrast, more individualistic cultures may encourage open expression of dissatisfaction, but without the necessary emotional regulation strategies, this openness can sometimes intensify rather than resolve discord. The influence of cultural narratives is also evident in how couples interpret their conflicts—whether they see them as signs of incompatibility, opportunities for growth, or threats to familial unity. For instance, studies conducted in Asian contexts highlight how psychological control and parent-child conflict can be exacerbated by unresolved marital dissatisfaction, further complicating the relational dynamics in multigenerational households (Leung et al., 2022).

From a clinical standpoint, the consequences of marital conflict extend far beyond interpersonal dissatisfaction. Conflict-ridden marriages are a leading cause for seeking psychological services and are frequently associated with a range of mental health issues, including emotional

dysregulation, low self-esteem, and even trauma-related symptoms. For example, conflict in the marital domain has been linked to emotional divorce, which is characterized by psychological distancing, lack of empathy, and disengagement, despite the continued existence of the marital bond (Arshadi et al., 2021; Parvizi, 2025). Clinicians often observe that couples who present with high levels of conflict exhibit difficulties in expressing emotions constructively, struggle with cognitive distortions about their partner's intentions, and often lack basic conflict resolution skills. Emotionally-focused interventions have shown that many couples in conflict fail to recognize each other's emotional needs, leading to a cyclical pattern of criticism and defensiveness (Birak et al., 2022).

In recent decades, researchers and practitioners have developed a range of intervention strategies aimed at reducing the negative impact of marital conflict and enhancing relational satisfaction. These interventions range from cognitive-behavioral and emotionally-focused therapies to culturally tailored programs and digitally-mediated formats. For instance, cognitive-behavioral couple therapy emphasizes the modification of dysfunctional thought patterns and behaviors that contribute to conflict, and has demonstrated considerable efficacy in improving communication and problem-solving abilities among distressed couples (Shafaghi, 2024). Emotion-focused therapy, on the other hand, targets underlying attachment needs and emotional expression, offering couples the opportunity to re-establish emotional security and connection (Khandabi et al., 2024). The diversity of available approaches reflects the complexity of marital conflict and the need for interventions that are both theoretically sound and practically adaptable to different populations and contexts.

Despite the breadth of available interventions, there remains a pressing need for a comprehensive synthesis of evidence that not only categorizes these approaches but also evaluates their relative effectiveness and contextual appropriateness. Much of the existing literature is fragmented, focusing on isolated outcomes or specific populations without offering a broader perspective on the field. While some reviews have addressed individual methods or cultural variations in intervention strategies, few have systematically synthesized the landscape of marital conflict interventions using a narrative framework that can accommodate the diversity of research traditions, therapeutic modalities, and cultural contexts (Asfaw & Alene, 2021; Renata Campos Moreira de Souza & Teodoro,

2022). Given the multifaceted nature of marital conflict, a narrative synthesis allows for a more holistic understanding of how different interventions function, for whom they are effective, and under what conditions they are most beneficial.

Key terms within the literature often vary across disciplines, necessitating clear conceptual clarification. In this review, “marital conflict” refers to persistent patterns of disagreement, emotional tension, and behavioral hostility between spouses, which negatively affect relationship satisfaction and overall well-being. It encompasses both overt manifestations, such as verbal arguments or physical altercations, and covert patterns like emotional distancing, avoidance, or passive aggression. “Intervention approaches” are defined as structured therapeutic or educational strategies, whether delivered individually, dyadically, or in group settings, that are designed to reduce conflict, enhance communication, and improve relational quality. These may be based on specific psychological theories, such as systems theory, cognitive-behavioral models, or attachment theory, and may be implemented through diverse delivery formats, including face-to-face counseling, online platforms, or community-based workshops (Darbani & Parsakia, 2022; Nasir & Ishak, 2024).

The relevance of conducting a systematic narrative review on this topic lies in its potential to bridge the gap between empirical research and clinical application. As marital conflict remains one of the most commonly reported issues in counseling and therapy contexts, practitioners require accessible, evidence-informed summaries of which approaches work best in which contexts. Moreover, the growing diversification of family structures, the normalization of virtual therapy formats, and the increased societal awareness of mental health have created new challenges and opportunities in how marital conflict is addressed (Davoodifar & Esmaeilian, 2024; Golyan et al., 2025). A narrative review allows for the integration of findings across qualitative and quantitative methodologies, enabling a richer understanding of intervention outcomes that go beyond statistical significance to include contextual nuances, participant experiences, and therapeutic mechanisms.

Therefore, the primary aim of this review is to examine and categorize existing intervention strategies for marital conflict based on empirical research published between 2016 and 2025.

2. Methods and Materials

This narrative review was conducted using a systematic approach to identify, analyze, and synthesize relevant studies on intervention approaches in marital conflicts. The aim was to collect and examine empirical evidence from peer-reviewed research published between 2016 and 2025, focusing on interventions that addressed various dimensions of marital discord, including communication breakdown, emotional disengagement, conflict escalation, and relational dissatisfaction. To ensure comprehensiveness and academic rigor, the review followed a clearly defined protocol for literature identification, inclusion criteria, data extraction, and descriptive synthesis.

In terms of research design, the study utilized a narrative review model with a descriptive analysis method. This allowed for flexibility in thematically organizing and interpreting the findings from diverse types of interventions while maintaining a systematic process in the search and evaluation of literature. The review was not limited to a single type of intervention or population but rather sought to encompass a wide range of therapeutic modalities and delivery formats—including individual, dyadic, group, and digital-based approaches—targeted at improving relational dynamics between married partners. Studies included were drawn from various contexts, including clinical, community-based, and culturally adapted programs, to enhance the relevance and applicability of the findings across different populations.

To collect relevant studies, a comprehensive search was conducted in electronic databases including Scopus, PsycINFO, PubMed, ScienceDirect, and Google Scholar. The search strategy involved combinations of keywords and Boolean operators, including terms such as “marital conflict,” “couple therapy,” “relationship intervention,” “marriage counseling,” “conflict resolution,” “emotional regulation,” and “communication skills training.” The search was limited to English-language articles published from January 2016 to March 2025. Additional articles were identified through manual screening of reference lists of key studies and relevant review papers. All articles were imported into EndNote for organization and duplicate removal. After initial screening based on titles and abstracts, full texts were reviewed in detail to determine eligibility.

The inclusion criteria for the review required that studies be peer-reviewed empirical research articles that focused on specific intervention strategies for addressing marital conflict or improving marital functioning. Interventions had

to be clearly described, with pre- and post-intervention assessments or outcome measures evaluating relational variables such as satisfaction, conflict intensity, communication patterns, intimacy, or emotional bonding. Studies focusing on premarital counseling, divorce prevention, or general family therapy were included only if they contained specific components addressing conflict within marriage. Exclusion criteria involved dissertations, conference abstracts, book chapters, opinion pieces, or studies that lacked methodological clarity or outcome assessment. Studies that solely focused on individual mental health outcomes without addressing marital interaction or relational functioning were also excluded.

Data extraction was performed systematically using a matrix to capture essential information from each selected study. Extracted data included the name of the first author, publication year, country of origin, sample size and characteristics, type of intervention, theoretical orientation, delivery format (e.g., in-person, online, group), session duration and frequency, outcome measures, and key findings. The studies were also categorized based on the intervention focus (e.g., behavioral, emotional, systemic, or cultural-religious) to facilitate a more nuanced descriptive analysis. This classification enabled the identification of dominant themes and allowed for the comparison of strategies across different theoretical orientations and cultural settings.

The quality of the included studies was assessed using relevant criteria adapted from the Critical Appraisal Skills Programme (CASP) checklist for qualitative and quantitative studies. While this review did not aim to conduct a meta-analysis or formal risk-of-bias assessment, attention was given to methodological robustness, clarity in reporting intervention components, sample representation, and validity of outcome measurements. Studies that lacked clear intervention protocols or failed to report outcome data were noted as methodologically weak and excluded from thematic synthesis, though they were acknowledged in the discussion where relevant.

To analyze the collected data, a descriptive synthesis was employed. This method allowed for thematic grouping of interventions based on their goals, techniques, and effectiveness in reducing marital conflict or improving relationship quality. Through inductive reasoning and cross-study comparison, the review identified both convergent findings and notable variations across the literature. The themes that emerged formed the basis for organizing the results section, providing insight into the strengths,

limitations, and applicability of different intervention approaches across diverse marital populations.

3. Findings and Results

The studies included in this review represent a diverse range of intervention strategies targeting marital conflicts. These interventions differ in theoretical orientation, delivery methods, cultural context, and population characteristics. To facilitate synthesis, the results are organized thematically based on the major types of intervention approaches identified in the literature. Each category is described in terms of its core features, empirical evidence, and effectiveness in improving relational outcomes such as marital satisfaction, intimacy, emotional regulation, and reduction of conflict.

3.1. Behavioral and Cognitive-Behavioral Approaches

A significant body of research focuses on behavioral and cognitive-behavioral interventions for marital conflict, emphasizing the role of distorted cognitions, communication errors, and learned behaviors in perpetuating relational distress. These interventions often involve restructuring maladaptive thoughts, enhancing problem-solving abilities, and reinforcing positive interactions. Cognitive-behavioral therapy (CBT), as a structured and evidence-based modality, is frequently used in clinical settings to help couples recognize and modify negative thought patterns that fuel conflict. Shafaghi (2024) demonstrated the effectiveness of CBT in enhancing marital commitment and managing interpersonal conflicts, emphasizing how cognitive restructuring techniques allowed couples to view their disagreements from less adversarial perspectives (Shafaghi, 2024).

Parvizi (2025) compared CBT with metaphor therapy in addressing marital burnout and found that CBT was particularly effective in reducing emotional fatigue by fostering cognitive clarity and realistic expectations within the relationship (Parvizi, 2025). Similarly, Ahmadzadeh et al. (2019) examined Acceptance and Commitment Therapy (ACT), a variant of CBT, and found that it contributed to significant reductions in marital conflict among couples coping with chronic illness, suggesting that the emphasis on psychological flexibility and values-based action plays a critical role in relational resilience (Ahmadzadeh et al., 2019). Moghim et al. (2022) also reported positive outcomes from ACT, especially in comparison with schema therapy, in lowering marital burnout and enhancing emotional

regulation among conflicted couples in counseling settings (Moghim et al., 2022).

Schema therapy, although conceptually linked to CBT, brings a more integrative and emotionally focused lens to behavioral patterns rooted in early maladaptive schemas. Khandabi et al. (2024) explored schema therapy's effects on attitudes toward infidelity and found it to be effective in reshaping dysfunctional beliefs and emotional responses in couples with relational trust issues (Khandabi et al., 2024). These findings support the view that cognitive-behavioral approaches, particularly when adapted to target individual schema structures or emotional flexibility, can substantially reduce conflict and foster mutual understanding.

3.2. *Emotion-Focused and Attachment-Based Interventions*

Emotionally-focused interventions draw on attachment theory and emphasize emotional responsiveness, secure bonding, and empathy within the marital dyad. These approaches often prioritize identifying and transforming negative emotional cycles that perpetuate conflict. One prominent model, Emotionally-Focused Couple Therapy (EFCT), was examined by Birak et al. (2022), who found that training in emotion management strategies based on EFCT significantly improved both family functioning and marital satisfaction (Birak et al., 2022). This indicates that helping couples recognize and respond to each other's emotional needs can serve as a powerful mechanism for conflict de-escalation.

Arshadi et al. (2021) assessed marital adjustment training rooted in emotional regulation principles and concluded that it was effective in reducing distress intolerance and improving emotional control, particularly in couples referred to clinical centers for high-conflict patterns (Arshadi et al., 2021). These results suggest that emotion regulation is a central mediator in the relationship between conflict and satisfaction. The work of Mardani et al. (2023) further supports this perspective. Their application of the Gottman method, which includes elements of emotion coaching and physiological self-soothing, led to improvements in emotional regulation and reductions in marital burnout and emotional divorce (Mardani et al., 2023).

Interventions grounded in attachment theory also emphasize self-differentiation and emotional safety. Joudari and Anasseri (2024) implemented paradoxical couple therapy and found that it enhanced self-differentiation and marital intimacy, indicating that fostering emotional boundaries alongside closeness may be particularly effective

for certain couples with enmeshed or anxious attachment styles (Joudari & Anasseri, 2024). These studies collectively demonstrate that emotion-focused and attachment-based interventions not only improve communication but also directly address the emotional underpinnings of conflict.

3.3. *Communication and Conflict Resolution Training*

One of the most commonly implemented and empirically supported strategies for reducing marital conflict involves training in communication and conflict resolution skills. These interventions typically target deficits in listening, assertiveness, empathy, and negotiation. Amidpour et al. (2021) reported that communication skills training significantly improved marital intimacy and reduced conflict among young couples, highlighting the foundational role of communication in sustaining a healthy relationship (Amidpour et al., 2021).

Davoodifar and Esmaeilian (2024) investigated the impact of positive psychotherapy on marital conflict and spiritual well-being, finding that explicit training in expressing appreciation, forgiveness, and values-based dialogue promoted relational harmony and personal growth in conflicted women (Davoodifar & Esmaeilian, 2024). Similarly, Zahedi (2019) demonstrated that compassion-based counseling could enhance marital intimacy, suggesting that empathy training contributes not only to communication clarity but also to emotional connectedness (Zahedi, 2019).

Khatibi et al. (2020) examined a satisfactory marriage training program that incorporated elements of both behavioral rehearsal and emotional expression, which proved effective in decreasing marital disillusionment and conflict among couples who were experiencing relational fatigue (Khatibi et al., 2020). These findings suggest that structured, skill-based interventions that equip couples with conflict resolution tools are effective, especially when paired with emotional awareness and intentional dialogue.

3.4. *Systemic and Family Therapy Models*

Systemic approaches view marital conflict within the broader relational and familial context, often addressing patterns of interaction across multiple subsystems, such as parenting, extended family influences, and societal roles. Poorhejazi et al. (2021) applied a unified protocol for family therapy that focused on emotional divorce and marital boredom, and found that systemic intervention helped couples reframe their conflicts and disrupt rigid interactional

patterns (Poorhejazi et al., 2021). This suggests that when conflicts are embedded within larger systemic dynamics, interventions that move beyond individual responsibility to relational processes may yield more sustainable outcomes.

Yektatalab et al. (2016) tested the efficacy of Bowen's family systems theory and found that it reduced marital conflict significantly by promoting emotional differentiation and reducing triangulation between partners and other family members (Yektatalab et al., 2016). This supports the value of systemic thinking in understanding how unresolved emotional patterns, often rooted in early family experiences, manifest in current marital dynamics. Similarly, Leung et al. (2022) found that marital dissatisfaction in Chinese families had a direct influence on psychological control and parent-child conflict, indicating the intergenerational transmission of unresolved marital tensions and underscoring the relevance of family system frameworks in such cases (Leung et al., 2022).

3.5. Cultural or Religious-Based Interventions

A growing number of interventions address marital conflict through culturally or religiously contextualized strategies, recognizing that beliefs about marriage, gender roles, and conflict resolution are deeply influenced by sociocultural norms. Spaumer et al. (2025) explored marital resilience factors in Black African marriages and identified culturally embedded conflict management practices, such as communal dialogue and spiritual reframing, as protective mechanisms against divorce (Spaumer et al., 2025).

Golyan et al. (2025) compared solution-focused narrative therapy with traditional solution-focused therapy in a religiously conservative population and found that the narrative therapy approach, which allowed couples to reauthor their relationship stories within a culturally acceptable framework, significantly enhanced marital intimacy and resilience (Golyan et al., 2025). Ghadaki and Darbani (2024) investigated the impact of a strength-based intervention on attitudes toward marital infidelity and found that culturally congruent approaches that validate social norms while introducing progressive relational concepts were more readily accepted by clients (Ghadaki & Darbani, 2024).

Lotfi (2025) compared Islamic-based marital skills training with secular approaches and concluded that integrating spiritual principles into communication training led to greater improvements in marital satisfaction and conflict resolution, particularly among religious couples

who valued spiritual alignment in their relationships (Lotfi, 2025). These studies highlight the importance of tailoring interventions to fit the cultural and spiritual worldviews of clients, which may increase both their relevance and effectiveness.

3.6. Digital or Technology-Assisted Interventions

With the rise of digital health solutions and increased demand for remote therapeutic services, technology-assisted interventions have gained prominence in marital conflict resolution. Nasir and Ishak (2024) introduced a virtual couples group intervention module (VCGi) designed to enhance marital quality, and reported that it effectively improved communication, empathy, and relational commitment among married individuals participating remotely (Nasir & Ishak, 2024).

Renata Campos Moreira de Souza and Teodoro (2022) developed an online conflict resolution program in Brazil and found that it facilitated constructive dialogue and emotional validation even in the absence of face-to-face interaction, indicating that digital delivery formats can maintain therapeutic alliance and intervention efficacy when designed thoughtfully (Renata Campos Moreira de Souza & Teodoro, 2022). Witami et al. (2024) examined the mediating role of communication patterns in the relationship between interparental conflict and offspring marital satisfaction, showing that digital tools used to train effective communication not only improved spousal relationships but also had intergenerational benefits (Witami et al., 2024).

Zhang et al. (2022) also emphasized the indirect effects of marital conflict on young adults' psychological outcomes, suggesting that online intervention programs targeting relational patterns could help mitigate broader family stressors (Zhang et al., 2022). These studies reflect a growing trend toward digital therapeutic innovation and suggest that online formats, when adapted to include interactive and culturally sensitive elements, are viable alternatives to traditional in-person therapy for marital conflict.

In sum, the thematic analysis of the included studies reveals that while various approaches offer unique strengths, the most effective interventions tend to be those that integrate emotional, behavioral, and contextual factors. The combination of emotion regulation training, cognitive restructuring, skill-based communication practices, and culturally responsive content appears to yield the most significant improvements in marital functioning. This

suggests that intervention effectiveness is not solely determined by theoretical orientation, but by how well the approach resonates with the couple's emotional needs, cognitive styles, and socio-cultural environment.

4. Discussion and Conclusion

The findings of this systematic narrative review demonstrate that a wide spectrum of intervention strategies have been developed and empirically tested to address marital conflict, with each approach reflecting distinct theoretical foundations, delivery formats, and cultural adaptations. One of the most consistent conclusions across studies is that interventions grounded in cognitive-behavioral and emotionally-focused frameworks yield measurable improvements in marital functioning, particularly in domains such as emotional regulation, communication quality, and conflict resolution. These outcomes are not only significant in the short term but also indicate promising potential for long-term relational stability when interventions are implemented consistently and tailored to client needs.

Cognitive-behavioral approaches, in particular, appear highly effective in addressing the cognitive distortions and maladaptive behavioral patterns that perpetuate marital discord. For instance, Parvizi (2025) demonstrated that CBT significantly reduced marital burnout by targeting negative attribution styles and fostering more constructive interpretations of spousal behavior, which enabled participants to approach conflict with less defensiveness and more problem-solving intent (Parvizi, 2025). Ahmadzadeh et al. (2019) similarly found that Acceptance and Commitment Therapy, a mindfulness-based variant of CBT, was instrumental in improving marital interactions among couples dealing with breast cancer, suggesting that the promotion of psychological flexibility helps couples navigate both relational and health-related stressors (Ahmadzadeh et al., 2019). These findings support the broader literature emphasizing the utility of cognitive-behavioral strategies in disrupting entrenched negative interaction cycles and reframing adversarial narratives that hinder relational growth.

Emotionally-focused and attachment-based interventions further underscore the importance of addressing the emotional undercurrents of marital conflict. As demonstrated by Birak et al. (2022), emotionally-focused therapy (EFT) significantly improved marital satisfaction by encouraging couples to recognize and respond to each

other's unmet emotional needs, thereby fostering deeper intimacy and reducing cycles of blame and withdrawal (Birak et al., 2022). These findings align with foundational attachment theory, which posits that secure emotional bonds serve as buffers against conflict escalation and relational distress. The work of Mardani et al. (2023) further supports this claim, showing that emotionally-attuned interventions based on the Gottman method helped couples regulate emotional arousal and enhance their ability to engage in non-defensive communication even during moments of conflict (Mardani et al., 2023). These emotionally-oriented approaches, by centering vulnerability and responsiveness, may be especially suited for couples struggling with disengagement, emotional distancing, or long-standing resentment.

Interventions focusing on communication and conflict resolution training emphasize the development of concrete interpersonal skills and have shown strong empirical support across various cultural contexts. Amidpour et al. (2021) reported that structured communication skills training significantly increased marital intimacy and reduced the frequency of unresolved disputes among young couples, highlighting the role of effective dialogue in fostering relationship satisfaction (Amidpour et al., 2021). This is consistent with Davoodifar and Esmaeilian (2024), who found that positive psychotherapy, which includes communication exercises alongside values clarification, contributed to improved marital well-being and spiritual connectedness among women with marital conflict (Davoodifar & Esmaeilian, 2024). These results indicate that even in contexts where psychological services may be stigmatized or underutilized, interventions framed around communication enhancement can serve as accessible entry points for couples.

The analysis also reveals that systemic and family therapy models offer unique insights by situating marital conflict within broader relational and societal frameworks. Poorhejazi et al. (2021) demonstrated that a unified protocol for family therapy not only reduced emotional divorce but also alleviated feelings of marital boredom, suggesting that addressing interactional patterns beyond the couple dyad can reinvigorate emotional and relational engagement (Poorhejazi et al., 2021). Yektatalab et al. (2016), using Bowen's family systems theory, found that promoting self-differentiation and reducing triangulation led to a decrease in marital conflict, reinforcing the idea that unresolved issues from family-of-origin dynamics often play a significant role in present-day relational distress (Yektatalab

et al., 2016). These findings align with broader systemic literature that underscores the interconnected nature of family roles, generational transmission of relational patterns, and the influence of social contexts in shaping conflict resolution styles.

Culturally and religiously tailored interventions emerge as especially relevant in non-Western settings, where cultural beliefs, spiritual values, and gender norms strongly influence marital expectations and conflict behaviors. Spaumer et al. (2025) explored conflict management strategies among Black African couples and identified culturally grounded practices such as communal problem-solving and spiritual guidance as effective in reducing divorce risk and enhancing marital resilience (Spaumer et al., 2025). Similarly, Lotfi (2025) found that Islamic-based marital skills training outperformed secular approaches in improving conflict resolution among religious couples, suggesting that alignment with clients' spiritual frameworks can enhance the perceived legitimacy and acceptance of therapeutic interventions (Lotfi, 2025). These culturally responsive approaches not only respect the lived experiences of clients but also leverage culturally sanctioned values to foster behavioral change, offering a more holistic pathway toward conflict resolution.

Technologically mediated interventions represent a newer but rapidly expanding area of practice, especially relevant in the wake of the COVID-19 pandemic and the increasing reliance on digital health platforms. Nasir and Ishak (2024) developed a virtual couples group intervention model that improved communication and empathy among participants, illustrating that digital delivery can retain core therapeutic benefits when well-structured and interactive (Nasir & Ishak, 2024). Similarly, Renata Campos Moreira de Souza and Teodoro (2022) highlighted the potential of online conflict resolution programs to reach populations who might otherwise be unable to access face-to-face counseling, whether due to geographic, economic, or social constraints (Renata Campos Moreira de Souza & Teodoro, 2022). These findings suggest that digital interventions, when culturally adapted and technologically supported, offer promising alternatives to traditional therapy, particularly for underserved or marginalized populations.

Despite these promising findings, several methodological and conceptual limitations are evident across the reviewed literature. One major issue is the relatively short follow-up duration in many studies, which limits the ability to assess the long-term effectiveness and sustainability of intervention outcomes. For example, while interventions such as those

evaluated by Joudari and Anasseri (2024) showed immediate improvements in marital intimacy and differentiation, the lack of extended post-treatment follow-up raises questions about the durability of these effects over time (Joudari & Anasseri, 2024). Additionally, many studies relied on self-report measures, which, although valuable, may be subject to social desirability bias and do not capture the full complexity of behavioral change.

Another limitation involves the underrepresentation of diverse populations and relational contexts. Although several studies explored interventions in non-Western or religious settings, the majority of empirical evidence continues to be drawn from heteronormative, middle-class, and cisgender couples. Research by Ghadaki and Darbani (2024), for example, focused specifically on women's attitudes toward infidelity, but did not include male or non-binary perspectives, limiting generalizability (Ghadaki & Darbani, 2024). Similarly, studies such as those by Cheraey et al. (2020), which compared different therapeutic models, often lacked sufficient detail on participant demographics, making it difficult to determine whether intervention outcomes are consistent across age groups, sexual orientations, or relationship stages (Cheraey et al., 2020). Future research would benefit from more inclusive sampling strategies and disaggregated data reporting that allows for intersectional analysis of intervention effectiveness.

Moreover, while some interventions incorporate culturally specific elements, few studies systematically evaluate cultural competence or adapt their measures to reflect diverse values and relational expectations. For example, while Golyan et al. (2025) adapted narrative therapy to a culturally conservative setting, the study did not assess participants' perceptions of cultural fit or therapist sensitivity, which could influence engagement and retention (Golyan et al., 2025). This points to a broader gap in culturally-informed evaluation metrics within marital conflict research. Including qualitative components such as interviews or focus groups could enhance understanding of participant experiences and inform the refinement of interventions.

Finally, there is a notable need for comparative research that evaluates the relative effectiveness of different interventions across relational stages—such as early marriage, long-term partnerships, or post-conflict recovery. Some studies, such as those by Mardani et al. (2023), included couples facing emotional divorce, whereas others focused on early signs of dissatisfaction or conflict emergence. However, few studies explicitly tailored

interventions to these developmental stages or assessed differential outcomes based on conflict severity (Mardani et al., 2023). Longitudinal and stage-sensitive research could help clarify which interventions are most appropriate at specific junctures in the marital trajectory and aid clinicians in matching treatment plans to client needs.

Marital conflict is a deeply complex phenomenon that affects not only the emotional and psychological well-being of individuals but also the broader fabric of family and social life. The evidence gathered in this narrative review reveals a wide range of intervention approaches that have been developed and empirically tested to address the multifaceted nature of marital discord. These interventions vary in theoretical grounding, delivery format, and contextual adaptation, reflecting the diversity of challenges that couples face and the need for flexible, responsive therapeutic strategies.

Among the most effective interventions are those rooted in cognitive-behavioral and emotionally-focused frameworks. These models provide couples with practical tools to challenge maladaptive thoughts, regulate emotions, and engage in healthier communication patterns. Their success lies in their structured approach and capacity to address both behavioral and emotional components of conflict. By promoting self-awareness and fostering empathy, these interventions enable couples to shift from cycles of blame and defensiveness to patterns of cooperation and mutual understanding.

Communication and conflict resolution training also emerged as foundational components of most successful interventions. Programs that equip couples with skills in active listening, assertiveness, and collaborative problem-solving consistently demonstrate improvements in relationship satisfaction and reduction in conflict intensity. These interventions are particularly valuable because of their accessibility and ease of adaptation across various settings and populations. They offer practical strategies that couples can implement immediately, making them especially beneficial for early-stage conflict prevention.

Systemic and family therapy models contribute a broader perspective by recognizing the relational patterns that extend beyond the couple dyad. These approaches emphasize the interconnectedness of family roles, generational influences, and societal expectations. Interventions that address these systemic factors help couples gain insight into the root causes of their conflict and reconfigure interactional dynamics that may be reinforcing relational distress. They also highlight the importance of working not only with

individuals but with the entire relational system to foster sustainable change.

Cultural and religious-based interventions reflect the growing recognition that effective therapy must be contextually sensitive and culturally congruent. Interventions aligned with clients' belief systems, values, and traditions are more likely to be accepted and integrated into daily relational practices. These culturally tailored programs validate clients' lived experiences and offer therapeutic tools that are both respectful and relevant. As societies become increasingly diverse, the importance of culturally competent interventions will continue to grow.

Digital and technology-assisted interventions offer new opportunities for expanding access to marital therapy, especially in underserved or remote areas. Online programs and virtual group formats have demonstrated promising results in improving communication, emotional connection, and conflict management. These interventions are not only cost-effective but also provide flexible alternatives for couples with scheduling constraints or geographical limitations. As digital health continues to evolve, further innovation in this area will likely play a critical role in the future of marital conflict resolution.

While the evidence supporting these diverse interventions is strong, important limitations remain. Many studies lack long-term follow-up, which limits understanding of the sustainability of intervention effects. Additionally, more inclusive research that accounts for variations in culture, gender, sexual orientation, and relationship stage is needed. The field would benefit from more robust comparative studies, longitudinal designs, and evaluations of client experiences to determine what works best, for whom, and under what conditions.

Overall, the findings of this review underscore the importance of a multi-dimensional, flexible, and contextually aware approach to resolving marital conflict. No single intervention can address the full complexity of relational challenges, but the collective insights from this body of research point toward a set of core principles: emotional attunement, clear communication, cultural sensitivity, and systemic understanding. By integrating these principles into practice, clinicians and researchers can more effectively support couples in navigating conflict, enhancing intimacy, and building resilient relationships that contribute to individual well-being and societal stability.

Authors' Contributions

Authors contributed equally to this article.

Declaration

In order to correct and improve the academic writing of our paper, we have used the language model ChatGPT.

Transparency Statement

Data are available for research purposes upon reasonable request to the corresponding author.

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